

**DEVELOPING MUSICAL  
'TASTE' AND MUSIC  
SELECTION FOR ARTISTIC  
DEVELOPMENT.**

**KANSAS BANDMASTERS  
ASSOCIATION  
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## Concepts taught through performing ensembles.

Tonal [CONCEPTS]  
Rhythmic [UNDERSTANDING]  
Form  
Technique  
Dynamics  
Articulation  
Phrasing  
Melody  
Texture  
Aesthetic/Emotional Impact  
etc.

## CHOOSING MUSIC THAT RESONATES

It is important not only to look at the quality of the music but also whether it resonates with you. This doesn't matter if you are teaching the youngest elementary students or those in high school. If the music doesn't resonate with you personally the ability to share true emotions as a group is relatively impossible. This is also true if the music lacks depth. Asking some or all of the following questions can be a starting point to identifying various types of music that you respond to emotionally. After that, it is necessary to expand the types of music you respond to by continuing to develop 'taste' for high quality music.

### Questions to ask yourself.....

Do I identify with this music?

Does it resonate with me emotionally?

What aspect of the music resonates with my aesthetic preference?

Does all of the music that I tend to chose for my ensembles convey the same/similar message?

How can I broaden my musical selections?

How do I bring the music to my students and by extension to the audience?

(This is the beginning of a list of questions – add your own to personalize this information.)

## **Make music everyday!**

*This is why I'm in my rehearsal every day!*

Each one of us is a musician and artist with something to say. We need to choose music and develop teaching strategies to convey that to our students.

*My efforts as an artist and teacher is to make this the reason students want to come to the rehearsal and perform as a member of the band!*



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[www.washburn.edu](http://www.washburn.edu)

## **Music Centered Classroom**

To achieve this, choosing high quality music is essential. Great art has inner force and can penetrate a receptive individual. Cultivating this in our students is important and a significant responsibility.

# Developing ‘Taste’ for high quality music.

What is ‘quality’ repertory?

What do we feed our students? (Hot Dogs and potato chips or filet minion and salad?)

Recall the “Wine” analogy!

How do we go about developing our taste? (By immersing ourselves in great art.)

- Attend high quality live concerts.
- Listen to music in areas other than your narrow section of the vast musical world.
- Listen to music that is beyond your ensemble or grade level’s ability to perform.
- Read great works of literature.
- View great paintings, sculptures, etc.
- Read the arts section of the new feed on your phone. If you don’t get it ask and look for it on NPR or the BBC etc.
- You will need to create some of these opportunities for your students.

***What is ‘quality’ repertory?***

***What comprises music of artistic merit?***

Does the music have...

- An emotional impact?
- A well-conceived formal structure?
- Creative melodies and texture?
- Harmonic imagination?
- Rhythmic vitality?
- Contrast in all musical elements?
- Scoring which represents the full potential for beautiful tone and timbre?

# Major Responsibility

“I believe in music that is demanding, that goes into the depth of the human being, not music for entertainment....If a work does not pose a question mark, then it is a waste of time.” - *Pierre Boulez*, conductor

“Repertoire selection has a major impact on what students will and will not learn, and it should help their musical understanding and appreciation.” - *Bob Reynolds*

“Students exposed to music of exceptional quality reap the aesthetic benefits to be derived from contact with great art.” - *Frank Battisti*

“As music educators, our primary purpose is to help individual students receive a music education through experiences and information. In order to achieve this lofty goal, we must strive to select the finest repertoire, for only through immersion in music of lasting quality can we engage in aesthetic experiences of breadth and depth.” – *Bob Reynolds*

“**Music is revelation!** The nature of music is revelation. It must say something, it must tell a truth that is human or divine or both, just delivering notes, even if it’s perfect, doesn’t give this revelation at all. So when you ask what is performance. I think the answer I would like to give is this: It is a personal witness, it is the way the conductor sees its meaning or message. It is in his mind, and he has caught a glimpse of the composer’s vision and gives it just as personally as if the composer would conduct it.” – *Herbert Blomstedt*

**Battisti comments on Blomstedt’s statement:** “I want to point out that Blomstedt’s statement implies that compositions have meaning or a message! None of what I write about above applies to the conductor who does not select music of quality. If we chose to conduct shallow music we can only conduct notation.” – *Frank Battisti*

**Selecting music** (2 general rules):

- 1) of the highest quality and
- 2) appropriate for the occasion and environment – *Frank Battisti*

Mr. Battisti is not advocating public school ensembles become professional choirs, orchestras or military bands with a primary mission of entertainment. He and Mr. Reynolds are advocating a mission that includes the education of young people and the audiences using high quality repertory that school ensembles perform for each year.

# Setting up balanced literature systems

This can be a long and difficult process. However, it can be an exciting and energizing process as well! Choosing music and listening to new music, rediscovering gems of the older repertory can be exciting. Thinking of ways to dynamically present the compositions can also be extremely exciting. Sifting through the thousands of compositions can be difficult and time consuming. To help with the process, answering some preliminary questions dealing with your ensemble will help.

## QUESTIONS:

- 1) Will my students grow in musical understanding and depth from preparing the music selected?
- 2) Will I also grow from the music selected?
- 3) Can true music-making happen in my classroom every rehearsal with the music selected?
- 4) What are my group goals for the coming year?
- 5) What compositions will I choose?
- 6) Do the selections represent a balance of styles, depth, etc.?
- 7) Do I know enough newly published music?
- 8) More importantly, do I know the best of the new music?
- 9) Have I checked my repertory list? Where are you at in the rotation of great works or composers?
- 10) How often should I repeat standard repertory or a composer?
- 11) Have I chosen music that is too difficult or too easy?\*
- 12) Will I have enough rehearsal time?\*
- 13) Will the students take to the music?\*
- 14) How much of the music will you select with the audience in mind?\*
- 15) Do I have the instrumentation to support the literature?\*

We could ask many more questions than these but this list is a start. Once you have answers to some or many of these questions use various tools to assist in developing your concert programs for the year. Repertory lists can be a useful aid. One word of warning, we are not speaking of catalogues or promotional materials; they are designed to sell material whether or not it is quality or poorly constructed music. While examining the lists and checking through your repertoire list/rotation it's important to think about the following aspects of the curriculum for the year.

- 1) Balance and developing both performance skills and critical thinking skills with regard to musical thought and performance.
- 2) Covering style periods and significant works both for band and transcriptions.
- 3) The development of musical skills. Reminder: this is not just technique it's the artistic aspect of being a musician.
- 4) Knowing that I can't do everything in one year have I made the best choices to develop the whole musician for this year?

In the final analysis we are what we teach. When compared to other teachers we have extraordinary freedom to do what we select. This is both wonderful and an enormous responsibility. We, as ensemble directors, are the only people who can guarantee a high-quality arts education for our students. Most people evaluating us have little idea what we are actually supposed to be doing or if it is good. As band directors we also have the highest level of demands upon us for civic and entertainment duties. It is easy to fall into the marching band and entertainment trap and lose sight of the most important thing we are here to do which is help young people become artists through the greatest medium – MUSIC!

## Repertory Sources:

Teaching Music Through Performance in... (Band, Chorus, Orchestra) GIA Publications - [http://www.giamusic.com/music\\_education/](http://www.giamusic.com/music_education/)

New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) – Manual  
[www.nyssma.org/manual.cfm](http://www.nyssma.org/manual.cfm)

Texas Music Educators Association - [www.tmea.org/](http://www.tmea.org/)

National Band Association - <https://nationalbandassociation.org>

Other music educators who you respect and don't forget the college people!

### Some advantages and problems with Repertory Lists:

#### Advantages

- a. Tracking literature performed over the years.
- b. Examining repertory that others believe to be of high quality.
- c. Starting point for programming ideas.
- d. Examine repertory without the 'sales pitch'!
- e. Provides you with a sense of technical level for each composition.

#### Warnings!

- Can get trapped in a group of pieces.
- Can get trapped in a period of repertory and not examine enough new literature.
- Can lead to monotony and boredom if each conductor doesn't continue to expand their knowledge of new music.

# Bloom's Taxonomy

**Knowledge:** arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce state.

**Comprehension:** classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, translate

**Application:** apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write.

**Analysis:** analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test.

**Synthesis:** arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, write.

**Evaluation:** appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose, compare, defend, estimate, judge, predict, rate, select, support, value, evaluate.

## Questions

**As teachers we tend to ask questions in the "knowledge" category 80 to 90 percent of the time. These questions are not bad but using them all the time is only teaching to the lowest level understanding and thinking. Try to utilize higher order level of questions. These questions require much more "brain power" and a more extensive and elaborate answer. The following are the six question categories as defined by Bloom.**

### KNOWLEDGE

remembering;

memorizing;

recognizing;

recalling identification and

recall of information

Who, what, when, where, how ...?

Describe

## **COMPREHENSION**

interpreting;  
translating from one medium to another;  
describing in one's own words;  
organization and selection of facts and ideas  
Retell...

## **APPLICATION**

problem solving;  
applying information to produce some result;  
use of facts, rules and principles  
How is...an example of...?  
How is...related to...?  
Why is...significant?

## **ANALYSIS**

subdividing something to show how it is put together;  
finding the underlying structure of a communication;  
identifying motives;  
separation of a whole into component parts  
What are the parts or features of...?  
Classify...according to...  
Outline/diagram...  
How does...compare/contrast with...?  
What evidence can you list for...?

## **SYNTHESIS**

creating a unique, original product that may be in verbal form or  
may be a physical object;  
combination of ideas to form a new whole  
What would you predict/infer from...?  
What ideas can you add to...?  
How would you create/design a new...?  
What might happen if you combined...?  
What solutions would you suggest for...?

## **EVALUATION**

making value decisions about issues;  
resolving controversies or differences of opinion;  
development of opinions, judgments or decisions  
Do you agree...?  
What do you think about...?  
What is the most important...?  
Place the following in order of priority...  
How would you decide about...?  
What criteria would you use to assess...?